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RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001905

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2018

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: UNPRECEDENTED MILITARY BRIEFING TO COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS ON COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS

REF: A. ANKARA 1732

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1057

Classified By: DCM Doug Silliman, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) At the military's request, the Chief of Turkish General Staff (TGS) Ilker Basbug briefed the Council of Ministers on Monday, October 27 on the military's counterterrorism efforts. This reportedly marked the first time the head of the Turkish military briefed the Council of Ministers and provides another indication of the efforts to accelerate military-civilian coordination on the fight against the PKK. Basbug was accompanied by the chief of military intelligence Lieutenant General Hakki Pekin and Chief of Domestic Security Operations Brigadier General Mustafa Bakici.

[1](#)2. (SBU) According to some media accounts, Basbug provided an overview of the military's efforts against the PKK since 1984 and gave details of the investigation launched following the deadly October 3 attack on the Aktutun military outpost (ref a). The military denied accusations that it was negligent in failing to prevent the attacks. Zaman and Yeni Safak, two pro-government, Islamic-leaning papers claimed that Basbug voiced support for democratic initiatives aimed at undermining support for the PKK and said Basbug was against the separation of civilian and military aspects of the fight against terrorism. According to these reports, Basbug pressed for the immediate commencement of state-TV run Kurdish language broadcasts, and urged the government to take the initiative in ending the shortage of imams in the Southeast, reasoning that religion should be a unifying factor for Turks and Kurds. (COMMENT: These conservative publications have their own agenda on this last issue. END COMMENT.) The papers alleged that Basbug also indicated support for establishing contacts with KRG leader Massoud Barzani. On October 30 the Prime Ministry issued a written statement denying all media accounts about the Basbug briefing, complaining that the reports were "manipulative."

[1](#)3. (SBU) PM Erdogan and a number of senior cabinet officials, including Deputy PM Cicek, Interior Minister Atalay, Defense Minister Gonul and Justice Minister Sahin are scheduled to visit the military commando school in Egidir on November 4 and will reportedly receive another briefing from GEN Basbug.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: While we have been unable to confirm the statements attributed to Basbug in the pro-AKP media, Basbug has expressed support for Kurdish language broadcasts in the

past (ref b). Other comments attributed to Basbug seem less credible, particularly the push for deploying more imams to the Southeast. Regardless, the TGS briefing to the Council of Ministers is another indication of the increasing civilian-military coordination in the fight against the PKK. Such briefings, combined with plans to create a new Undersecretariat within the Ministry of Justice (septel) to coordinate the fight against terrorism are welcomed steps. Welcome and overdue as these steps may be, we think it unlikely that the GOT will want to advance politically sensitive policies needed to help reduce PKK support among ethnic Kurds before the March 2009 municipal elections.

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